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From: "Carol MacMillan" <Carol.MacMillan@fldfs.com>
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Subject: TALLAHASSEE MAN ARRESTED FOR THEFT OF STATE FUNDS

Information from the Department of Financial Services:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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TALLAHASSEE MAN ARRESTED FOR THEFT OF STATE FUNDS

TALLAHASSEE - Florida's Chief Financial Officer Tom Gallagher announced that a Tallahassee man suspected of diverting nearly \$25,000 in public funds, from a program intended to teach teens how to drive safely, surrendered today to investigators with the Department of Financial Services, Office of Fiscal Integrity.

"Fraudulent abuse of taxpayer dollars for personal gain is unconscionable," said Gallagher, who oversees the Office of Fiscal Integrity.

Paul Ester Burris, 54, President of Partners for Highway Safety Foundation, Inc (PHS), has been charged with grand theft and organized scheme to defraud, both second-degree felonies. He was booked into the Leon County Jail and, if convicted, faces up to 15 years in prison for each charge. Burris has operated PHS, a youth-driver education organization, in Tallahassee since 1992.

Department investigators allege that in 2003, Burris double-billed the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) and Leon County for a 2003 Mercury vehicle. The vehicle cost \$16,145. Burris obtained a combined total of \$31,145 from the state and county.

Investigators further stated that in December 2003, a local printing company billed Burris/PHS \$5,012 for the printing of 1,000 manuals for use with the PHS youth driver education programs. Burris persuaded the owners of the printing company to re-write the \$5,012 invoice for \$12,120, resulting in a personal gain to Burris of \$7,108.

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Moreover, in June of 2004, Burris requested that the same printing company prepare an invoice for the printing of Spanish versions of the driver manuals. The printing company never printed these manuals and was never paid the funds indicated on the invoice they issued to Burris. However, Burris still worked to obtain the \$2,265 in printing costs.

Further investigation into Burris' activities is ongoing. The Department of Financial Services, Office of Fiscal Integrity, investigates criminal misuse of state funds or property impacting the citizens of Florida. To report fraud, waste, or abuse of state resources, call (850) 410-9890.

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